# Capital Area Parkinson's Society

Newsletter/July 2017

P.O. Box 27565, Austin, Texas 78755-2565 capitalareaparkinsons.org


## Getting Precise about Precision Medicine in Parkinson's

***Loren DeVito, PhD, The Michael J. Fox Foundation, May 31, 2017***

*Editor's Note: For more Foundation news, research updates and tips on living well with Parkinson's, read the Spring/Summer 2017 edition of The Fox Focus, our biannual newsletter.*

Using the same medicine(s) to treat everyone with a given disease is the mainstay of modern medicine. Nonetheless, this "one-size-fits-all" approach doesn't always lead to outcomes patients want, as people often respond differently to the same medicine, and some may not respond at all. Researchers are working to address this challenge through "precision medicine."

Precision medicine involves tailoring therapies for individuals based on their genes, environment and/or lifestyle. You may be familiar with this approach for cancer—unlike chemotherapy that kills cancer (and healthy) cells, successful personalized drugs instead target genetic mutations. But how might precision medicine be used to treat Parkinson's disease (PD)?

Parkinson's is a heterogeneous disorder, meaning no two individuals have the same symptoms, disease course or treatment response. If we could better understand what drives these differences, we could, in theory, develop better medicine.

As in cancer, some Parkinson's scientists believe genetic mutations may be the basis for tailored treatments. Even though known mutations account for fewer than 10 percent of total PD cases, a greater understanding of Parkinson's genetics already has led to critical discoveries believed to be applicable to all individuals with the disease. "Finding a common mechanism behind different suspected causes of Parkinson's suggests that there might also be a common means to treat or cure it," says Marco Baptista, PhD, director of research programs at The Michael J. Fox Foundation (MJFF).

In 1997, a mutation in the alpha-synuclein gene was first linked to a family with Parkinson's. Though the mutation is extremely rare, alpha-synuclein protein clumps (Lewy bodies) are seen in the brains of nearly everyone with Parkinson's, and offer a potential target for slowing or stopping disease progression.

To date, five anti-alpha-synuclein therapies have advanced through drug development to arrive in clinical (human) testing. Other genetic mutations also are leading to treatments. *LRRK2*, although fairly uncommon, is the greatest known genetic contributor to PD and has inspired the development of *LRRK2* inhibitor drugs expected to enter clinical trials within 18 months. Additionally, medications t targeting *GBA*, the most common of the currently known PD genetic mutations, have made it into clinical testing. These are all examples of precision medicine.

"We will only get to true cures if we can move away from historical clinical disease definitions to one more nuanced and linked to underlying biology, genetics and pathology," said MJFF CEO Todd Sherer, PhD and co-authors in *Personalized Medicine*. "Truly transforming PD treatment into a precision approach will require tackling key research and regulatory challenges and the coordinated effort of the entire PD community."

Learn more about Parkinson's genetics at michaeljfox.org/pdgenetics.■

**2017 CAPS Overdue Dues are Due!**

If you haven't paid your annual membership dues for 2017, please submit them as soon as possible. These funds allow us to provide CAPS members with the many programs that we offer. Individual dues are $25 and $40 for a family. We appreciate your support! Thank you!


**JULY 3 AND 4, 2017**

***If your email address has changed for our mailing list, please call the office at 512-371-3373. Thank you!***

## board of Directors

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## Area Outreach Support Groups

**Belmont Village – 2nd Friday @ 10:30am**
4310 Bee Cave Road
Westlake Hills, TX 78746

**Burnet – 2nd Wednesday @ 2pm**
Seton Highland Lakes Hospital,
Conference Room
309 Industrial Blvd. (Behind Hospital)
Burnet, TX 78611

**Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) – 3rd Friday @ 2pm**
Neurology Solutions Office
12345 N. Lamar Blvd.
Austin, TX 78753

**Lakeway – 1st Tuesday @ 2pm**
Vibra Rehabilitation Hospital of Lake Travis
2000 Medical Drive
Lakeway, TX 78734

**Participant Organized Parkinson's Singing Group – Wednesdays 12:30-1:30pm**
Unity Church of the Hills, Unity Oaks Bldg.
9905 Anderson Mill Road
Austin, TX 78750

**Querencia/Barton Creek Southwest – 4th Wednesday @ 2:30pm**
Plaza Building, 2nd Floor, Lantana Room
2500 Barton Creek Blvd.
Austin, TX 78735

**Round Rock – 4th Tuesday @ 3pm**
Wyoming Springs Assisted Living
7230 Wyoming Springs Drive
Round Rock TX 78681

**Simultaneous Care Partner and Patient – 2nd Tuesday @ 10:15am**
Covenant Presbyterian Church
3003 Northland Drive, Austin TX 78757

**Young Onset Parkinson's Disease (under 55) Last Saturday @ 10:00am**
Stinson's Bistro, 4416 Burnet Road
Austin TX 78756
Contact: Bob Sahm at 512-914-2132
or rsahm99@gmail.com

**For more information, visit www.capitalareaparkinsons.org.**

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## July Membership Meeting

**Saturday, July, 15 ■ 2:00–4:00 p.m.**
**Medical Office Building, St. David's Medical Center**
**3000 N. IH-35, 5th Floor Conference Room**

***Hot Topics in Parkinson's***

Dr. Elizabeth Peckham, D.O. is part of Central Texas Neurology Associates, a specialist in movement disorders. Dr. Peckham is board certified in Neurology by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and has completed specialized fellowship training in movement disorders. She has also worked as a private practice movement disorder specialist and cared for Army soldiers and family members as a contract neurologist. Dr. Peckham now specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of Parkinson's disease, Parkinsonism, Essential tremor, Myoclonus, Tourette's syndrome/Tics, Ataxia, Dystonia, Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS), Huntington's disease, Tardive Dyskinesia, and Psychogenic movement disorders. She has extensive experience with the evaluation for and programming of deep brain stimulators and botulinum toxin injections.

**Medtronics will provide a box lunch following our meeting.**